

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9616

USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PFOR THHU

SUBJECT: VISA FOR VOA STAFFER VARSA

REF: BUDAPEST 2117

1. AS STATED REFTEL DCM AND PAO CALLED ON AMBASSADOR VARKONYI, CHIEF MFA DEPARTMENT V, MAYY 22 TO DISCUSS VARSA VISA CASE. MFA DEPUTY PRESS CHIEF HAD INFORMED PAO PREVIOUS DAY THAT VPPA REFUSED BECAUSE OF " CERTAIN ACTIVITIES" OF VARSA' S ON WHICH HE WOULD NOT ELABORATE. DCM EXPLAINED THAT DECISION BASED ON SUCH A FLIMSY PRETEXT TO BAR VARSA FROM COVERING BUDAPEST FAIR WWI UNPALATABLE AND NOT IN HARMONY WITH RECENT IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. AT FIRST EMBASSY HAD THOUGHT VARSA TURNDOWN ON VISA BY GOH HAD BEEN IN ERROR, BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT IT REPRESENTED DELIBERATE GOVERNMENT (PROBABLY SECURITY ORGAN) GOVERNMENT DECISION.

2. VARKONYI REPLIED THAT HE HAD STUDIED VARSA CASE CLOSELY AND COULD ASSURE EMBASSY GOH HAD NO INTENTION OF BARRING ALL VOA CORRESPONDENTS. CITED AS EVIDENCE GRANTING OF VISA TO BELGRADE VOA STAFFER MARK HOPKINS NOT TOO LONG AGO. SAID
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IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT VOA, WITH LARGE STAFF OF CORRESPONDENTS, HAD PROPOSED TWO WHO WERE UNACCEPTABLE TO GOH. HE HOPED USG WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT BY NOMINATION TWO "56' ERS" ON CONSECUTIVE YEARS TO COVER BUDAPEST FAIR GOH HAD BEEN PLACED IN EMBARRASSING POSITION. DCM REMINDED VARKONYI VARSA HAD BEEN ADMITTED TO HUNGARY IN 1972. VARKONYI REPLIED THAT GOH HAD GRANTED VISA RELUCTANTLY SO AS NOT TO CAUSE ILL FEELING AT TIME OF SECRETARY ROGERS' VISIT. BUDAPEST FAIR, HOWEVER, WHILE IMPORTANT, WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT ON THE SAME LEVEL AS THE VISIT OF SECRETARY ROGERS TO HUNGARY.

3. VARKONYI WOULD NOT BE DRAWN INTO FURTHER DISCUSSION RE REASONS FOR VARSA REJECTION. HE REITERATED THAT CASE WAS OF CONSIDERABLE EMBARRASSMENT TO MFA AND GOH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. SAID ANYTHING AFFECTING RELATIONS BETWEEN US AND HUNGARY CONSIDERED WITH UTMOST CARE BOTH IN BUDAPEST AND WASHINGTON. HE PLEADED FOR US UNDERSTANDING OF GOH PROBLEM WITH "56' ERS" WHICH HE SAID REQUIRED DELICATE HANDLING. WOULD BE A GREAT PITY HE CONCLUDED IF THIS CASE WERE PERMITTED TO WORSEN RELATIONS AT A TIME WHEN SO MUCH PROGRESS HAD RECENTLY BEEN ACHIEVED. REPEATING HIS EARLIER STATEMENT THAT GOH HAD NO OBJECTION TO VOA AS SUCH, OR TO VOA COVERAGE OF BUDAPEST FAIR, VARKONYI SAID THAT VISA APPLICATION FILED BY ANOTHER VOA CORRESPONDENT IN ANOTHER CATEGORY (OBVIOUSLY HE MEANT NOT OF 56' ER) WOULD BE GIVEN IMMEDIATE AND FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION BY HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT.

4. COMMENT: DEMARCHE REVEALS IN OUR VIEW THE FOLLOWING:
(1) GOH CONTINUES TO HAVE NO OBJECTION TO VOA AS SUCH, INCLUDING COVERAGE OF THE FAIR; (2) WHILE GOH PREPARED TO RECEIVE DORMER '56 ERS AS TOURISTS IT IS TROUBLED BY THEIR PRESENCE UNDER U. S. GOVERNMENT AUSPICES; (3) GOH PAINFULLY EMBARRASSED BY DECISION. IN FACT, VARKONYI APPEARED TO BE APPEALING FOR UNDERSTANDING; (4) FROM HANDLING OF THE CASE MFA CLEARLY NOT THE AUTHORITY WHICH MADE THE DECISION ON TAKACS AND VARSA; (5) IF VOA PREPARED TO SEND ANOTHER REPORTER TO COMNR REMNANT OF FAIR BELIEVE HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT READY TO ISSUE VISA AUTHORIZATION.

5. EMBASSY MADE CLEAR ITS APPROACH TO AMBASSADOR VARKONYI LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AT POLITICAL LEVEL WAS TO EXPRESS ITS DISPLEASURE AT DECISION AND TO HIGHLIGHT UNDESIRABLE IMPACT ON U. S. - HUNGARIAN RELATIONS.
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